

SCED's speech at Chinese Food Exhibition 2012 (English only)

Following is the speech by the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, Mr Gregory So, at the Chinese Food Exhibition 2012 in Tokyo today (May 16):

Distinguished guests, friends, ladies and gentlemen,

Ohayou gozaimasu (meaning "Good morning" in Japanese).

I am very pleased to join you all for this Chinese Food Exhibition.

Japan and Hong Kong are home to two of the world's great food cultures. People around the world often first get to know our countries through our cuisines. So it is a great honour to be here in Tokyo to talk about Chinese food.

I should mention that I am not a trained chef or an expert food taster. Similar to most people, when it comes to food, I know what I like and I like what I know.

Donning my cap as Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development, I am fully aware of the importance of Chinese cuisine to Hong Kong's culture and its economy.

In Hong Kong, there are over 12 000 eateries. Most of these are Chinese restaurants serving not only our native Cantonese cuisine, but culinary treats from across China including Shanghai, Sichuan, Fujian and Inner Mongolia, to name just a very few. Whether you are in search of a tasty bowl of noodles, a traditional dim sum lunch with colleagues or a fine-dining experience with friends and family, there is something for everyone in Hong Kong.

Our tens of millions of tourists each year also enjoy the wonderful adventure of sampling different regional delicacies. In 2011, we welcomed a record of almost 42 million visitors to our city. They spent a total of around HK\$20 billion, or some 208 billion Japanese Yen, on dining out in Hong Kong. Around 1.3 million visitors were from Japan, making this country our third largest source of inbound tourists last year.

To highlight our city's dining attractions and help visitors discover the very best examples of classic Chinese dishes, the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) launched the Best of the Best Culinary Awards programme in 2001. It has proved very

successful, with many of the award-winning restaurants reporting an uptick in business.

Also, the first prestigious Michelin Guide covering Hong Kong and Macau was published in 2010. It includes over 250 restaurants and more than 50 hotels.

I am very encouraged to see the great interest and high quality of Chinese cuisine here in Japan. I hope that this will help to entice even more Japanese friends to come and visit Hong Kong.

This is a long-running exhibition showcasing the culinary skills, variety of ingredients and diverse tastes synonymous with Chinese cooking. Each year, the exhibition attracts thousands of catering industry professionals and food lovers, with tantalising activities including awards for young chefs and cooking demonstrations.

I hope that all visitors will take advantage of this exhibition to sample the many tastes of China and learn more about the skills and ingredients that go into great Chinese cooking. The HKTB has arranged for one of our top chefs to come here to prepare his award-winning dim sum specialty, King of Shrimp Dumpling. I can assure you this is a treat not to be missed.

I also take this opportunity to invite you to come and visit us in Hong Kong as the next stage of your culinary adventure. As well as the thousands of restaurants to choose from, you can also take part in our many food promotion activities.

One of our newest and largest events is the Hong Kong Wine and Dine Festival held in November each year. This is a great opportunity for people in the food industry to network and promote their business to buyers and suppliers from around the world. It also coincides with city-wide food promotions, so there is bound to be something new and exciting to tickle the taste buds.

Ladies and gentlemen, it just remains for me to wish you all a very enjoyable and successful Chinese Food Exhibition 2012. And I hope that you will come and visit us in Hong Kong soon.

Thank you very much.

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